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LIGHT SHOW OF A LIFETIME

TOURISTS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE FLOCK TO CANADA'S NORTH TO GET A GLIMPSE OF THE AURORA BOREALIS **PAGE 18**

A made-in-Calgary production

City is aiming to attract even more movie and TV productions with new studio **PAGE 3**

Local gay bar backs skater at Sochi

Twisted Element's co-owner couldn't be happier to aid one of Canada's medal hopefuls at the Olympics **PAGE 8**

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BLAST OF FRIGID WEATHER

A heavily clothed Joan Nevard crosses the pedestrian bridge over the Bow River just east of 10 Street Tuesday afternoon in -20 C weather that felt like -32 with the windchill. Wednesday is forecast to be just as cold in Calgary, with a high of only -19 C (feeling like -28 with the windchill), according to The Weather Network. **ROBSON FLETCHER/METRO**

Cops praise speed cams as fines plunge

Slow and steady. 18 per cent fewer motorists caught with a lead foot in 2013



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Calgary motorists appear to have taken their foot off the gas a tad in 2013 as speeding tickets issued citywide plunged, according to data provided to Metro on Tuesday.

In all, 309,900 tickets were issued last year, down from 377,762 the year prior, an 18 per cent decrease.

The vast majority of those tickets — 260,654 last year and 316,240 in 2012 — came from either photo radar or so-called "speed-on-green" photo enforcement units.

Police Staff Sgt. Paul Stacey conceded June's historic flood and record dumps of snow likely played a role in the reduced fines but he also believes the controversial speed-on-green method of enforcement, rolled out in 2009,

has begun to make motorists think twice before hammering the pedal.

"As we roll along, the cameras appear to be having the desired effect," he said. "What we're seeing right now is a reduction in intersection crashes — especially the ones monitored by intersection cameras — as well as the areas in and around those intersections."

To the end of the third quarter of 2013, total collisions in the city had risen slightly compared to 2012 but were five per cent below the five-year average, according to police data.

In 2012, police reported the average driver tagged by the cameras, which cover 51 intersections, was travelling 22 kilometres per hour over the posted limit, but Stacey said that number also appears to be trending downward.

Police were still finalizing figures on the revenue earned for speeding infractions. In 2012, the service earned \$4 million more than it expected from the cameras, which prompted city councillors to vote in favour of moving those funds out of the police budget

and back into general revenue.

As part of the same move, council also created a \$4-million reserve fund for police from fine revenues collected in 2012.

At the time police commission chair Mike Shaikh warned that the fine numbers would likely come down as motorists got used to photo-enforcement at intersections, but later said he supported the funding adjustment.

Shaikh's successor, Rodney Fong, said Tuesday he expected that the city wouldn't go dipping into police pockets this time around, if revenue dropped in line with the reduced number of fines.

Speed-on-green fines, specifically, dipped from 123,284 to 105,500 year-over-year.

Coun. Shane Keating, who sits on the city's community and protective services committee, said he was pleased to see fewer speeders tagged, as it indicated city streets were safer in 2013. He added that police operations are budgeted "as if nobody got a ticket," and any money netted from camera fines is allocated for "extra things" to enhance the service.



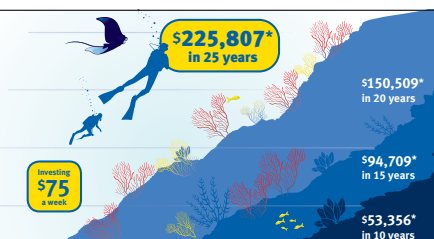
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'Gobbledygook'

Report cards will change one school at a time

Students in Calgary public schools will still be trading in their current report cards, but exactly when will depend on where they attend classes.

That was the word from Calgary Board of Education Chief Supt. Naomi Johnson during a presentation on outcomes-based assessment to trustees Tuesday night that attempted to address myriad concerns raised by parents. Last year, fears swirled after it was revealed the organization was moving to report cards that both used word grades like "emerging" and "evident" and no longer contained teacher comments.

New-form report cards will still contain the comments now — in fact, the news shared with parents will be even more personalized, officials pledged.

But Johnson said some "course corrections" had been made and schools are now communicating the changes with parents at a more measured pace.

"What we wanted to do is give schools room to grow and to get to a standard report card when they could, rather than putting on any extra pressure," she said.

Frank Bruseker, president of the Alberta Teachers' Association local, took in the presentation but said he still came away scratching his head. He said the initial changes were pitched as a "workload-reducer" for instructors. Now he fears the opposite to be true, and deemed some of the learning stems outlined as being nothing more than "gobbledygook."

JEREMY NOLAIS/METRO



Culture Minister Heather Klimchuk and Calgary Economic Development CEO Bruce Graham announce details of a new city film studio Tuesday. ROBSON FLETCHER/METRO

\$23M, check: Lights, camera, Calgary!

Film studio, sound stage. Calgary Economic Development heading up project funded by the city, province and private sector

Calgary is aiming to attract even more movie and TV productions — and keep them here longer — with the construction of a new film studio and its first permanent sound stage, which is expected to open by summer 2015.

Culture Minister Heather Klimchuk announced a \$5-million investment from the prov-

vincial government Tuesday, to go along with \$10 million already committed by the city and other investments from private partners.

All told, the project is expected to cost \$22.8 million and will be developed by Calgary Economic Development at a yet-to-be-confirmed location.

"We could actually have three concurrent productions going at the same time," Calgary Economic Development CEO Bruce Graham said of the proposed facility.

Coun. Peter Demong said council originally supported allocating its share of the funds back in 2009, with the goal of diversifying the city's economy and taking advantage of the

Sound stage

- The facility is to include two sound stages, one 20,000 square feet in size and the other 30,000 square feet.
- In addition would be another 18,000 square feet of warehouse space and 10,000 to 15,000 square feet of workshop space.

growing interest in Calgary and area as a filming location.

"We've already got a thriving business here, but I believe we're losing a lot of the post-production to other areas," De-

mong said. "They do the shoots here — we've got the gorgeous climate and gorgeous vistas — but we're not getting the full impact of the industry."

Klimchuk noted the recent filming of popular television series like *Hell on Wheels* and *Klondike* in the Calgary area and the ongoing production of the TV adaptation of the film *Fargo*, currently being shot in the city.

"The timing is absolutely critical right now to get this done, because the temporary film studio is on the Currie army base and we know those (barracks) will eventually be gone," Klimchuk said. "We need a permanent studio."

ROBSON FLETCHER/METRO

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Grizzly bear slayings soar

Illegal. Activist calls poachers a real threat to the 'iconic species'



BRYAN WEISMILLER
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Eleven grizzly bears were illegally killed in 2013 as Alberta recorded its highest number of human-caused deaths in a decade.

A total of 31 grizzlies died last year — with human interaction blamed in more than three-quarters of the cases, according to provincial figures.

Conservationist Sean Nichols called grizzly bears an "iconic species" and warned poachers are a serious threat.

"You go down the highway and you see billboards with big grizzly bears on them," said Nichols of the Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA). "You look anywhere ... grizzly bears are really a symbol of Alberta that's known across Canada and around the world."

"They're at risk of disappearing fairly soon."

Hunting grizzly bears is illegal in Alberta because they are considered threatened.

Punishment

Poaching can lead to fines up to \$100,000 and jail time.

- At least one poacher was jailed last year, according to the province.

At 11 illegal deaths, the 2013 figures show a precipitous jump above the 10-year average of 4.3.

Officials with Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development described poaching as the "biggest culprit" and "also the most problematic" when it comes to the grizzly mortality rate.

Conservation groups, including the AWA and Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS), have called for stricter provincial laws as a new species-survival plan gets written.

Wildlife advocates like Katie Morrison also suggest it's too easy to access grizzly country through roads, trails and pipeline paths.

"It creates a situation where there's more potential for conflict," said Katie Morrison of CPAWS' southern Alberta chapter.



Roughly 700 grizzly bears are left in the province, as per a 2010 count. Conservationists were alarmed Tuesday by newly released mortality figures that show a dramatic rise in human-caused deaths. STEVE MICHEL/PARKS CANADA/THE CANADIAN PRESS

New phone scam

Missed call? Leave well enough alone

If you get a call and an immediate hang-up from an unknown number, Calgary's Better Business Bureau is advising that you don't dial back.

A new type of scam is tricking curious cellphone owners into racking up expensive bills.

"If you call back then you will be connected to a caller-pay toll service or chat line," said spokesperson Leah Brownridge.

ROBSON FLETCHER/METRO

Donors, saviours

Sled Island fest shall return

Organizers behind Calgary's Sled Island festival have announced the four-day music and arts showcase will return June 18-22.

The festival's future had been thrown into question after last June's historic floods. However, after a plea from organizers, 70 per cent chose to donate the money spent on their ticket rather than accept a refund. METRO

Hey, artists — have you got what it skates?



Visual artist David Brunning, a.k.a. TheKidBelo, says he had "a blast" covering this concrete wall at Shaw Millennium Park. COURTESY DAVID BRUNNING

Street artists of all stripes are being urged to pitch plans for several new skateboard parks popping up across the city.

With up to 50 outdoor facilities set to be built in the next decade, Calgary public art officials issued a call for submissions on Tuesday.

In broad strokes, the winners will be tasked with adding art to park designs, gathering community feedback

and helping execute the plan.

"We think the less prescriptive, the better," said program co-ordinator Stacey Dyck. "This artist is going to have a lot of opportunity to work with a bunch of different people and look at a bunch of different things and put their perspective in the whole process."

Prolific graffiti artist David Brunning — better known

as TheKidBelo — suggested skateboarding and art formed an organic relationship in the 1980s, when grip tape became used as a graphic medium.

The two cultures have only continued to dovetail since then, he added.

"It makes sense that skateboarding and art comes together and that the city would honour that," said Brunning, who's used the

city's only permanent skate site, Shaw Millennium Park, as a canvass in the past.

The deadline for submissions is Feb. 24 at 4 p.m.

City officials aim to get the first four to six skate sites developed in the summer of 2015. The total project budget rings in at \$30,000.

More specifics can be found on the City of Calgary's website. BRYAN WEISMILLER/METRO

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